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SUBJECT: HIRC STAFFDEL HALPIN'S CHINA VISIT

REF: A. BEIJING 11385
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1C. BEIJING 10893
1D. BEIJING 10749

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) Reftels reported that House International Relations Committee (HIRC) STAFFDEL Halpin, consisting of Dennis Halpin and Hans Hogrefe, cut short its visit to Xinjiang after members of the family of Rebiya Kadeer were detained. As noted reftels, the STAFFDEL and the Embassy repeatedly urged Chinese officials to release the family members immediately. This message reports on other aspects of the STAFFDEL's May 24-June 5 China program. In Beijing, the Staffdel discussed issues including American citizen cases, human rights, North Korean refugees, China-Japan relations, China's energy needs and Congressional exchanges. During the STAFFDEL'S shortened visit to Urumqi, Xinjiang, the delegation met with local officials and visited mosques, the Islamic Institute, a publishing house, and a middle school. End Summary.

Embassy Meetings on American Citizen Cases

2. (SBU) In a meeting with the DCM and Halpin, Helen Kim, wife of detained Amcit Steven Kim, thanked the Embassy for its assistance in facilitating her husband's transfer to a prison in Beijing. Kim lamented that her husband continues to serve a five-year sentence after his September 2003 detention, while Japanese and South Koreans detained for similar offenses have already been released. She noted that Mr. Kim suffers serious health problems, including heart disease and hypertension, and requested Embassy support for efforts to win his early release on medical parole or humanitarian grounds. The DCM assured Mrs. Kim that the Embassy would continue to make every effort to assist Mr. Kim.

3. (SBU) Separately, Halpin met with Consul General and ACS Chief to raise concern about other Americans jailed in China for assisting North Koreans to flee the DPRK, including Korean-American Reverend Philip Jun Buck. Halpin also urged greater State Department attention to the vulnerabilities of Americans who contract to teach English in China, such as John Shaff in Shenyang and Darren Russell in Guangzhou. He conveyed a copy of a report he prepared on the Russell death case to emboffs. Finally, Halpin raised the case of U.S. businessman David Ji, suggesting that Ji is being held "hostage" without charges and unable to leave China so that a Chinese company can gain leverage in an unresolved business dispute.

MFA Meetings on North Korea, Human Rights

4. (SBU) Halpin, after reviewing general trends in U.S.-China relations with MFA Director General for North American Affairs Liu Jieyi, said there is strong support in the United States for those who help North Koreans in China, specifically raising the cases of Rev. Kim Dong-Shik, Steven Kim and Philip Buck. Liu said those who break Chinese laws are "criminals." Halpin objected strongly, comparing those helping North Koreans in China to those in American history who ran the underground railroad to help escaping slaves. Hogrefe emphasized USG support for the rights of members of minority groups, including Uighurs, and urged China not to demonize Uighur exile Rebiya Kadeer. Liu called Kadeer a "criminal" and stated that no one is more concerned about the people of Xinjiang than the Chinese Government.

5. (SBU) In discussions on UN issues, MFA DDG for International Organizations Shen Yongxiong said Beijing believes it is time for an Asian UNSYG but has not settled on a specific candidate. Shen emphasized China's efforts to improve human rights, including those of ethnic minorities. Foreigners are misled by exiles who advocate separatism in Tibet and Xinjiang, he said in response to Hogrefe's expressions of concern.

6. (SBU) Halpin raised a number of human rights cases with

both DG Liu and DDG Shen, including American Legal Permanent Resident Yang Jianli, Internet writer Shi Tao and American citizen David Ji. He urged that China issue visas to American scholars who contributed to the book "Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland." Hogrefe urged DDG Shen to look into cases of detained Uighur writers and scholars Kurash

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Huseyin, Abdulghani Memetin and Tohti Tunyaz.

UNHCR: North Koreans in China

17. (SBU) UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Regional Representative for China and Mongolia Michel Gabaudan told Halpin that the Chinese Government's approach toward the handful of North Korean cases his office has dealt with is improving, although the PRC continues to reject calling these individuals refugees. Because of China's concern about becoming a magnet for North Korean asylum seekers, it is more willing to cooperate with UNHCR when such cases are handled quietly, Gabaudan said. In response to Halpin's expressed interest in seeing North Koreans in China resettled in the United States, Gabaudan emphasized that UNHCR's primary concern is seeing that North Koreans in China receive "immediate protection." Currently, South Korea provides an effective mechanism for resettling North Koreans from China, he noted, although UNHCR will also take advantage of the United States' offer in certain circumstances.

CASS Scholar on China-Japan Relations

18. (SBU) CASS Institute of Japanese Studies Professor Jin Xide told the STAFFDEL a lack of common national interests and a generational change in leadership are the primary causes for the current tense China-Japan relationship. PM Koizumi is part of a post-WWII generation that does not know history and cannot accept criticism of Japan. China feels PM Koizumi needs to stop visiting the Yasukuni Shrine, to deal with Beijing's concerns about history and to show it has no intention to contain China and dominate the region. An August 15 visit by PM Koizumi to Yasukuni would have a large negative impact on bilateral relations, with Chinese people reacting strongly, if not taking to the streets. April 2005 anti-Japanese riots in China were led by the "rich middle class," Jin claimed, as opposed to previous anti-Japan uprisings that were started by university students with support from the government and academics. China's leaders cannot afford to oppose such popular movements, nor can Chinese scholars, he said, noting that he has been careful not to publicly support Japan after PM Koizumi's Yasukuni visits, lest it "interfere with his career."

19. (SBU) The PRC does not have a firm position on Japan's bid for a permanent UNSC seat, Jin said. Halpin expressed some skepticism, noting that China lobbied hard in Africa and Asia to scuttle Japan's efforts. No country in Asia respects Japan, Jin claimed, adding that Tokyo looks down on less developed Asian countries. Japan's aggressiveness, as illustrated by its expanding military, the Yasukuni visits and Japan's bid for a permanent UNSC seat, put China in a defensive and reactive position. Nonetheless, Jin believes Sino-Japanese economic relations, trade and investment will continue to grow and that the political situation will gradually improve. Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe and FM Taro Aso have toned down their positions, he claimed. This could reflect factors including U.S. pressure, the election of Ichiro Ozawa as opposition party president and the rise in the polls of moderate former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda, who enjoys good relations with China. The East China Sea remains the most dangerous issue and the governments are working to prevent an "unexpected EP3-like incident."

NPC Official on Burma

10. (SBU) During a dinner with Vice Chairman of the NPC Foreign Affairs Committee Lu Congmin, Hogrefe cited the importance of progress on human rights issues for the future development of U.S.-China relations. Human rights issues are important, Lu agreed, but should not be the only issue. Hogrefe asked Lu about Chinese policy toward Burma and what stand China would likely take if a UNSC resolution was proposed regarding the political situation there. China is concerned about the difficult situation in Burma, Lu said, and wishes Burma would resolve its internal difficulties on its own. When pressed, Lu said China would oppose sanctions against Burma and said he believes that international pressure on Burma would not work and would likely be counterproductive.

NDRC: Don't Blame Us for Higher Oil Prices

11. (SBU) Wu Guihui, Deputy Director General (DDG) of the

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NDRC's Energy Bureau, disagreed with Halpin's assertion that rising demand from developing countries is driving oil prices higher. Price increases are largely a result of political factors, most notably the war in Iraq and the ongoing Iranian nuclear crisis. DDG Wu stated that China's oil imports fell

in 2005 and that China meets some 93 percent of its energy needs through domestic resources. China,s strategy to meet its growing energy demands is to focus on increasing domestic energy production. Domestic oil production in China,s Daqing oil fields increased in 2005, Wu stated.

¶12. (SBU) Hogrefe voiced concerns about China,s search for oil in areas of international political concern, such as Sudan and Iran. DDG Wu said that China,s effort to secure international energy resources is unrelated to attempts by the international community to resolve specific political crises. China,s national oil companies are publicly traded and thereby make their decisions for business reasons without seeking the Chinese Government,s permission. Western oil companies, monopoly over large, proven energy reserves has led Chinese national oil companies to seek resources in politically risky areas. The U.S. Government should support China's efforts to encourage more cooperation between U.S. and Chinese energy companies to mitigate the Chinese companies' need to do business in politically sensitive areas, Wu stated.

Xinjiang: "Economy, Religion and Ethnic Harmony"

¶13. (SBU) A three-hour seminar in Urumqi on Xinjiang's economic and social development May 31 was overshadowed by news of and questions about the detention (reftels) of family members of Uighur businesswoman Reibya Kadeer. Deflecting questions about the Kadeer family, Xinjiang Vice-Governor Nuerlan Abudumanjin highlighted Xinjiang's economic development, infrastructure improvements and harmonious relations among the province's multiple ethnic and religious groups. More than half of the local government cadres and people's congress representatives are members of ethnic minorities and 85 percent of minorities with higher education are employed, he said.

¶14. (SBU) In response to the delegation's questions, Nuerlan said that Chinese Government officials and Communist Party members cannot attend mosque. Other officials added, however, that they can invite imams to come to their homes for significant events, such as the celebration of births or marriages. Children should not attend mosque or formal religious education before they reach the age of 18 to avoid interference with their secular education, Nuerlan said.

¶15. (SBU) Responding to individual cases raised, Ethnic and Religious Affairs Department Director Ah Pizi told the STAFFDEL that Ms. Aminan Momixi, detained in August 2006 for teaching the Koran to a group of children, was jailed because she was preaching ethnic hatred. Momixi's classes taught hatred of Han Chinese and separatism, not mere religion, Ah said. "Nonetheless, she was never formally jailed and is now at liberty after taking education classes and acknowledging her errors," he said. Separately, Ah denied reports that Xinjiang Christian Tong Qimiao had been injured by security officials after attending house church worship in Xinjiang in ¶2005. "If that had happened, I would have known about it," he told poloff. The delegation visited Urumqi's No. 16 middle school, the Xinjiang People's Publishing House, the Shanxi Mosque and the Xinjiang Islamic Seminary before departing Xinjiang ahead of schedule to protest the Kadeer family detentions.

¶16. (SBU) The STAFFDEL did not have the opportunity to clear this message.

RANDT